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AUTHOR Tharp, Roland G.: And Others
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses community psychology programs which serve members of alternate cultures and are based on the premises that: (1) individuals may possess desirable behaviors that are suppressed by their environmental context: (2) conventional behavioristic methods are inadequate for assessment: and (3) an interdisciplinary approach is needed to design effective programs. A multidisciplinary strategy employed by the Kamehameha Early Education Program, a K-3 program for Polynesian-Hawaiian children, is described in which desirable behavior repertoires are discovered, rather than created, by multidisciplinary methods, and the school, rather than the child, is modified to encourage the desirable behavior. Examples of this strategy illustrate the use of ethnography to discover that behaviors desired in school are also present in the home. Modification of the school environment to approximate the cue-functions of the home is discussed. Sociolinguistics, the study of social parameters which affect language use, is offered as a strategy for designing a school environment conducive to language development. Linguistics, dialect, and discourse analysis are presented as methods for exploring the children's use of pidgin speech. The discovery of preexistant repertoires is identified as a first step in designing effective intervention strategies. (NRB)

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Behavioral Community Psychology: A Cross-Cultural, Cross-Disciplinary Example with Theoretical Implications

Roland G. Tharp

University of Hawaii

Cathie Jordan

Kamehameha Early Education Program

Clifford R. O'Donnell

University of Hawaii

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Roland G. Tharp

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Behavioral Community Psychology: A Cross-Cultural Interdisciplinary Example with Theoretical Implications

The community approach is distinguished by addressing problems through the environmental context in which the problems occur. Accordingly, community intervention may take the form of developing new programs within the existing structure of natural settings, creating alternative structures, or modifying the existing structure of the setting itself. Typically, intervention has taken the form of using the existing apparatus of social settings to organize influences on the target behaviors of problematic individuals or groups (training parents and teachers to reinforce more rationally); or, as an alternate form of address, the creation of special procedures, ad hoc, to do the same thing for specific problem populations (the "buddy" system; half-way houses). As a rule, the alternate strategy of a radical attack on the structure of the settings themselves has been left to that brand of "community psychology" which uses political means and paradigms. And no community interventionist has lacked the experience of the intransigence of institutional structures; it is difficult enough to change one child, let alone an entire state's school system.

However, we suggest another reason for the relative neglect of the strategy of seeking radical change in settings, a reason which lies in the history and continuing assumptions of most behavioral community psychologists. Most of us have been trained as clinicians; the field has grown gradually from the roots of behavior modification in the careful shaping of desirable behaviors in institutionalized children, and though we have "moved out into the community" we have taken along with us one limiting assumption and process. Typically, we look at the target person or group

in the environment where the problem is located. We find an absence of desirable behavior, or an excess of undesirable. We design programs to create the desirable behavior, and if we are community-sophisticated, we urge the social environment to influence more rationally toward that process of creation. If we have inventiveness and power, we may even develop structures to create the behavior.

In this process, we carry the assumption that the flaw, lack, or problem lies in the individual, and that the behavioral task is to create desirable behavior. The alternative view occurs to us too seldom: perhaps the problem lies in the existing environmental context. If the desirable behavior is indeed missing from the individual's repertoire, we might ask why the natural setting hasn't created it. Why should special procedures be necessary to create it? Instead of implementing special procedures so the individual or group may acquire the behavior (e.g., token systems), why not assess the environmental context to see if the flaw or lack might lie there?

In doing so we may find that in many cases the desirable behaviors do in fact exist within the repertoire of the target individual-or-group, but the existing environmental context does not allow its occurrence and improvement. For such conditions, the intervention strategy would be quite different: the context would become the target, and the goal would be to <u>allow</u> the repertoire rather than to create it.

We do not suggest that this is a universal condition, nor that all contexts are tractable to reform. But in considering the state of the art, we will risk some overstatement to call attention to this possibility, because where it is so, appropriate intervention will differ radically from standard practice.

Before proceeding to the example, let us take the argument one step further, and for that purpose, assume that a target group may well have buried deep within its repertoire such qualities as cooperativeness, compliance, cognitive flexibility, self-care skills, or whatever behavior whose non-appearance in a given setting constitutes the consultation problem. Why would we not discover these elements? First, we too often confine assessment to that envirnoment which reports the deficiency. If the school complains, we watch the child in the classroom; if the family complains, we send observers to the home, but rarely assess the total environment by including sibling, peer, playground, or street culture. That inadequacy of assessment can be corrected by greater diligence and more resources, but we suggest that a second cause for non-discovery of desirable repertoire is more potent, and again lies deep in the common processes of our profession. Conventional behavioristic methods and constructs themselves are inadequate for comprehensive assessment and conceptualization: that may be the root problem.

In the first example, we will see several knotty community-intervention problems, the solution of which required the use of assessment procedures developed by some sister disciplines: anthropology, linguistics, socio-linguistics, and discourse analysis. The use of these methods allowed the discovery of repertoires of concern. That discovery altered the consultation task, which then became institutional-modification, modification which would allow the desired behavior to occur.

Example: The Kamehameha Early Education Program

The Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) is a remarkably successful research-and-development enterprise, which has produced consistent national-

norm level educational achievement for ethnic minority children, both in its own laboratory school, and in its export operations into the public schools of the State of Hawaii. Like other minority children, those of Polynesian-Hawaiian ancestry do not ordinarily prosper in the public schools. A case can be made that Hawaiian children experience the lowest level of academic achievement among United States ethnic minorities; by the fourth grade, state-wide testing on Stanford Achievement Tests in reading has placed the means of schools with predominantly Hawaiian populations in the lowest stanine of national norms.

Polynesian-Hawaiian adults, though there are notable exceptions, are underrepresented in middle-class and leadership groups, and overrepresented in the registers of distress: welfare rolls, prison populations, unemployment. The KEEP program, designed to produce educational competence in the earliest years of school, and thus to interrupt the compounding effects of poor reading ability--school failure, dropout, delinquency, poor earnings, social disorganization--may be seen in community mental health terms as a primary-prevention program. KEEP operates a laboratory and demonstration school in Honolulu, enrolling primarily Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian, urban, poor children in kindergarten through the third grade. KEEP is a multi-disciplinary program, involving anthropologists, linguists, and educators, but is under the immediate control of behavioral psychologists. Its purpose is to design, demonstrate and export an effective school program for Hawaiian children. A fuller description of the research and development strategy may be found in Tharp and Gallimore (1979); of culture-and-education issues, in Jordan and Tharp (1979); and of evaluation results, in Tharp (1980).

When in the ordinary school setting, Hawaiian children are most often described as "lazy, disinterested, disorderly, disruptive," and lacking basic cognitive and linguistic skills requisite for school-learning (Tharp & Gallimore, 1976). In the first four years of KEEP operation, the basic strategy was to create, by a rich diet of positive reinforcement, a repertoire of attentiveness, industriousness, and orderliness. This effort was successful; an average on-task rate of 90% was achieved; positive reinforcement rates double those of control groups were emitted by KEEP teachers; the children and their parents were happy with the school environment (Tharp & Gallimore, 1976).

During this phase, the same strategy was employed in the training of cognitive skills. A careful task analysis was drawn from the reading-skills literature, and the cognitive strategies of word-attack, de-coding, vocabulary memorization, and the like were carefully programmed, assessed, and reinforced. The creation of a cognitive skill repertoire was undertaken, by sophisticated behavior modification procedures. The result of all this hard work by children, teachers, and researchers was nil: for so long as this strategy of repertoire-creation ex nihilo was employed, the KEEP children did no better on standardized test results than did control children in public schools. A typical result was a mean 27th percentile on the Gates-MacGinitie Tests of Reading Achievement. Of particular interest here is the experience of this behavioral-community program which required drastic revision of behavioral strategy in order to solve this minority-education problem, which it has apparently now done. The program authors attribute this success to an altered strategy of 1) discovering, rather than creating, the desired repertoire, 2) by the use of methods of sister disciplines, and then 3) modifying the school

institution, rather than the children, so that the desirable behaviors are allowed to occur. Three illustrations of this altered strategy will now be adduced.

Illustration #1: Ethnography

The first is the use of the basic "assessment" method of anthropology--that of ethnography. Elements of the revised KEEP program have drawn heavily from a five year ethnographic study of Hawaiian culture (Gallimore, Boggs & Jordan, 1974; Howard, 1973); and a continuing ethnographic process within the school itself (Jordan, 1977, 1978).

Ethnography is the careful observation, by a sensitive individual, of the regular life of a society, and the writing down of these observations, together with conclusions about their regularities. The observations are not quantified, inter-observer reliability is not an issue; the observer is the "measuring" instrument, and the role of the observer is as participant-observer, sharply different from the detached, objective role assumed by the behavioristic observer. The ethnographer lives with, participates in, the life of the culture, and tries, insofar as possible, to understand the meanings and interweavings of the acts and values seen.

When Hawaiian children are seen in their home environments, the ethnographic descriptions are utterly different from a repertoire catalog as exhibited in the classroom environment, where they are typically (and not inaccurately) described as "lazy, disinterested, uninvolved, and irresponsibile." Ethnography has revealed to KEEP that the Hawaiian children are unusually responsible; from their earliest years they participate in the life of the family--cooking, cleaning, laundry, and caring for their younger brothers and sisters, and most important, taking responsibility for organizing these tasks themselves. Most often it is not the parent

who assigns tasks and directly supervises, but the oldest child, which means that in fact any supervision is minimal, and initiative and good performance rest with the individual five-and six-year old. When there is a task to be done, some child up and does it. The parent is often unaware of which child does what; but in Hawaiian culture, that is not important. The work is a family need, and the group of siblings is the unit that gets it done (Tharp, Jordan, Baird, & Loganbill, 1980; Gallimore, et al., 1974). From an ethnographic perspective, then, it is possible to see that this repertoire, so desired by the school, is present in the children; the school institution itself prevents the occurrence. The task of the behavioral interventionist is to modify the school to allow initiative, responsibility, and effort. On a community or institutional level, the task is not to create and shape a new repertoire; it is to modify the school so that it more nearly approximates the cue-functions, which in family life elicit that responsibility-and-effort performance. Again, the ethnographic description provided the information needed; the KEEP solution was as follows:

In the morning, before school, the teacher (typically) is at her desk, organizing the morning's work. Outside, the children are on the playground, playing tag or marbles as they wait for the first-bell which signals them to line up at the door of the classroom. In an ordered way, they enter the classroom, sit in a specified pattern, and the teacher conducts the first business of the day. Typically there may be appointed "monitors" or "captains" for various duties: leading the Pledge of Allegiance, changing the calendar, taking attendance, etc. And on the teacher's instruction, instructional activities begin.

As a response to the ethnographic data, the KEEP teacher adopted a different strategy: First, she opened the door to the classroom a half-hour or so before the bell, and then went about her business of setting up the classroom chairs, taping newspaper to the top of the art table, counting out assignment sheets for various children's morning work, and the like. She gave no assignments, and did not ask that any children join her.

She merely allowed the children to observe the necessary work, and allowed them to observe her in the performance. This was sufficient cue to trigger their high-probability response, which was to join in, take over, and organize the execution of the tasks for themselves. Within a matter of days, a dependable group of eight or so children appeared regularly each morning to participate in this morning work; within a matter of weeks, the activity was so institutionalized that virtually every member of the class participated in some degree, on some days, as the spirit moved them. Although the individual roster of participants was somewhat different from day to day, and thus the exact tasks performed by each child varied, all the work of setting up the classroom was done by the children. By the end of the school year, the academic tasks themselves were being organized by children; that is, they would look at the daily schedule of learning centers, and then count-out appropriated work sheets, textbooks, art supplies, and distribute them around the room and into the storage boxes. (This task contained more academic learning opportunity, perhaps, than did the eventual exercises themselves.) This system of child-responsibility extended to the clean-up phase of the school-day. The teacher merely indicated that the children should also see hat the classroom was restored to order, at the end of each day, and the phenomenon

repeated: On an entirely volunteer, informal, and child-organized basis, the learning centers were disassembled, files restored, chairs stacked on tables, sweeping or mopping done as necessary. As a matter of experimental test, the teacher (in this pilot classroom) gave no instructions whatsoever, and no assignments to individual children. In fact, this absence of specific instruction was the cue which elicited, for these children, the very behavior wanted.

The side-effects of this program alteration were considerable, though difficult to specify in behavioral terms. Observers of the classroom repeatedly commented on the sense of involvement, ownership, and pride exhibited by the children. The form of the classroom radically altered; the necessity for monitors disappeared; the rigid hand-edge boundaries between one activity and another gave way to a softer, more impressionistic flow. Visitors commented that it was difficult to see any exact moment when "school" actually began. KEEP's ethnographer reports that the classroom took on the major organizational and emotional features of Hawaiian cultural life. The phenomenon is apparently a stable one; a similar strategy has now been used by KEEP in four other classrooms, with virtually identical processes and effects. A detailed presentation of this program is available in both 16mm. film and videotape formats (Tharp, et al., 1980).

Illustration #2: Sociolinguistics and Cognitive Skill

The first illustration focused on social behaviors. In the next, we will focus on intellectual behaviors. And will see the same principles illustrated: the contributions of a sister discipline toward the discovery of the needed child behaviors: in this instance those cognitive and linguistic repertoires upon which learning-to-read rests.

Sociolinguistics is the study of those social parameters which affect language use. In education, it is necessary to fully engage the linguistic and cognitive capacities of children. It is reasonable to assume that when Hawaiian children perform poorly in conventional education, their linguistic and cognitive capabilities have not been engaged.

Observation of conventional Hawaiian classrooms confirm it: When teachers call on individual children to recite or answer questions, in a formal context typical of classrooms, children's answers are minimal, stilted, and embarrassed. (This is in contrast to their speech among themselves, which is lively.) The classroom stereotype of Hawaiian children is of language deficiency. As we shall see, an alternative formulation is possible: The typical classroom is deficient in those setting events which produce linguistic richness of repertoire in these children. Stephen Boggs, Richard Day, and Karen Watson-Gegeo have conducted extensive sociolinguistic explorations with Hawaiian children in order to discover those social settings in which children display maximal, linguistic and cognitive complexity. They obtained speech samples of Hawaiian children in varied ways: planting a tape-recorder at the dinner tables of families; conducting experiments of standard interviews with children, with different numbers of other children and adults present; by creating little doll-house and doll-store settings, simply by talking with children in every available setting and circumstance (Day, 1975a, 1975b).

Perhaps the richest of these settings is that called "talk-story" or a subtype of "talk-story," called "storytelling" (Watson-Gegeo & Boggs, 1977). Among the features present in such settings are: a small group of children, a sympathetic and receptive adult, informality, turn taking, overlapping speech, and co-narration. The image is of a group of children

under a tree with a friendly adult, all enthusiastically creating or recalling a story together. Under such circumstances, verbal sequences of great richness and complexity are produced by quite young Hawaiian children. This is an image quite different from the listless, disinterested, or resistent Hawaiian child often seen in the school setting.

The KEEP program evolved an element which duplicates many features of the "talk-story--storytelling" format. During the daily small-group, direct-instruction reading lessons, about five children are seated in a semicircle before the teacher. Typically, there is a text present for each person, and often a brief period of silent reading occurs. Then the teacher begins to ask questions about the story at hand. Details, main ideas, alternative outcomes, speculations about the children's motives or feelings, and related personal experiences of the children--all are interwoven into a group discussion which is experienced by the teacher as planned instruction, but is experienced by the child as "storytelling" (Au & Jordan, 1978). That is, the teacher behaviors are the children's "storytelling" linguistic repertoire. Many of the features described by Watson-Gegeo and Boggs are present: co-narration, overlapping speech, and enthusiastic engagement. There are differences: The teacher does enforce roughly equal opportunities for each child to speak, over a period of days--apparently the self-regulating, equal-time principle, characteristic of the fully developed adult form of Hawaiian "talk-story" activity, does not develop until about age 12 (Boggs, 1972). The teachers do not, however, enforce a rigid turn-taking system, nor do they demand responses from a child who is not ready to participate, thus preserving the child-experienced informality of the enterprise, which is vital to the child's continued engagement (Jordan & Tharp, 1979, pp. 281-282).

Illustration #3: Linguistics, Dialect, and Discourse Analysis.

Most Hawaiian children speak "pidgin"--more properly known as Hawaiian Creole. This speech code has developed over many decades from a true pidgin, composed of Hawaiian language, English, Chinese, etc., but is now a widely-used Creole, characteristic of most Hawaiian and thousands of Oriental and Caucasian residents of Hawaii. Technically, this code is undergoing "decreolization"--that is, it is becoming a dialect of English, comparable to the other many dialects of English--Appalachian, Black, Texican. Like other dialects the code is considered low-status both by its speakers and non-speakers. Pidgin-speaking parents generally want their children to learn Standard, in addition to pidgin, for the advantages in employment and status which Standard speech brings. Most children in Hawaii are in fact bi-dialectal; even those who speak almost entirely in pidgin can also understand, and to some extent produce, Standard.

Should there be, in the public schools, specific instruction in the speaking of Standard English? Both citizens and professionals are sharply divided on this issue. The KEEP research, however, indicates that learning to read--even learning to read Standard English - is facilitated if children are allowed to discuss the text in their own dialect, because in the child's own dialect are found the greatest complexity and richness of expression. In the child's own dialect are found the tools for cognitive operations necessary to consider the meaning of written material.

Within their own dialects, the children produce thought and language equal in equality to anyone's. How can this judgment of quality be made? The methods of <u>discourse analysis</u> offer an analytic tool of great value to behaviorists. We can only allude here to those methods; they are in fact not highly structured, and basically involve making a typescript

transcription of all the speech which occurs in a conversation, and the painstaking study of that transcript, using concepts of "themes," "routines" or any number of other qualities. Natural speech goes by so quickly that we cannot often analyze it for quality. But when careful study is made of story-telling sessions, or of the "talk-story" reading lesso we find the linguistic competences of syntactic complexity, flexible use of vocabulary, the ability to generate new and alternate forms of construction--all those tools of language which are the tools of thought--to be present in dialect speech, more than in the Standard speech of these bi-dialectal children. That is, the KEEP linguistic research, using discourse analysis, has found a sufficient linguistic repertoire. The intervention task is to persuade the school to allow it.

During school instruction, the KEEP teacher always accepts the children's pidgin speech. She may restate a child's remark, into her own Standard English, especially if it contains a grammatic structure crucial to deciphering the text's meaning. But even such restatements are done in a way to emphasize that Standard is the way the teacher speaks, not in a way punitive to the child's speech.

There is a stage in reading instruction when even the text is used in pidgin. Many poor children do not have much experience with written language; many of the homes in the KEEP sample altogether lack text--no newspapers, magazines, or books. Many have to learn in school that text is another form of spoken language, that it contains images, memories, and meaning. The earliest KEEP texts are those dictated by the children themselves. They tell stories, in pidgin, and the teacher writes them down, in pidgin. This becomes the text for study, and the children can learn that the marks on the page somehow store the words they spoke.

Their own words form their earliest of written vocabulary. They learn to read their own stories back to themselves, and to talk about them. This method is known as language experience, in education circles; KEEP did not invent it, though has perhaps adopted it more radically than is typical.

In ordinary pacing, this self-created text method ends in early first grade, and instruction moves to Standard text material. Throughout the kindergarten-to-third grade program, however, the teachers accept the children's speech in the code which it is preferred; as Standard fluency increases, so does the Standard proportion, but there is great individual variation, and the instructional strategy remains constant: to allow the children to use their own developing linguistic repertoire.

The KEEP reports emphasize that there are also elements, deemed necessary to child learning, which have not been discovered in the children's existing repertoires, and which must be shaped in more conventional ways (Gallimore, 1978; Jordan & Tharp, 1979). Neither they nor we argue that every target population has all necessary behaviors. The point here is that if the community psychologist looks for preexistent repertoires, they are more likely to be found; and if found, the intervention strategy appropriate is easier to implement, more elegant in conception, and of greater potential effectiveness. The KEEP program, for example, over a period of four years, three sites, and four grades, has produced class averages of about the 50th percentile on standardized tests of reading achievement, compared with control groups averaging about the 35th percentile (Tharp, 1980).

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